



MEMORANDUM

*Tallahassee-Leon County
Planning Department*

To: Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Commission
Through: Jean Gregory, Planning Manager
From: Kristen A. Andersen, Senior Planner
Date: April 3, 2003
Subject: Proposed Revisions to County Land Development Regulations Regarding Buffering and Screening Requirements

Introduction and History

This proposal modifies the County's land development regulations to require Landscape Buffering Standard "A" between single-family detached residential developments and other single-family detached residential developments and two-family attached residential developments. Landscape Buffering Standard "A" requires the developer to install a buffer area ranging from 10 to 20 feet in width that contains varying amounts of plant material required depending on the size of buffer width chosen.

The 1992 City and County Zoning Codes established buffer zone standards requiring landscaped strips along parcel boundaries for the purpose of buffering and screening in between incompatible land uses. A table of buffering and screening requirements was adopted that provided the type of buffer required. That chart, as amended, is attached (*Attachment 1*). Currently, developments consisting of single-family detached homes, manufactured homes, and two-unit, single-family attached housing are not required to install buffering. These typically low density residential uses (0 to 8 units per acre) are currently required to be buffered from townhouses, multifamily housing, and mobile home parks, which are typically moderate to high density (8 to 16 units per acre) residential uses.

Consistency Determination

Planning Department staff has reviewed the proposal and finds it to be consistent with the overall intent of the Comprehensive Plan especially as it relates to the protection of residential development. Several Objectives and Policies are summarized below and an analysis is provided regarding the proposed ordinance provisions.

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- Land Use Policy 1.4.11 provides that the land development regulations shall include minimum setbacks and buffer requirements for uncomplimentary land uses. The proposed ordinance amends the buffering requirements to require an additional buffer not previously required. This Policy does not provide specific buffering criteria and therefore the proposed ordinance is not inconsistent with this Policy.
- Land Use Objective 2.1 states to enhance the livability of existing neighborhoods and in new neighborhoods provide for future mixed residential areas which will accommodate growth and provide a wide choice of housing types, densities and prices as well as commercial opportunities based on performance criteria. The proposed ordinance may further the intent of this Objective by requiring a buffer in between single-family detached residential developments and two-family attached residential developments effectively facilitating compatibility and the development of a wider choice of housing types.
- Land Use Policy 2.1.1 states to protect existing residential neighborhoods from encroachment of incompatible uses that are destructive to the character and integrity of the residential environment. The proposed ordinance establishes buffering requirements in between similar developments (two single-family detached developments) that are not generally considered to be incompatible. However, the proposed ordinance also requires a buffer in between single-family detached residential developments and two-family attached residential developments effectively facilitating compatibility.
- Transportation Element Policy 1.6.3 encourages the interconnection for vehicle and pedestrian traffic between adjacent, compatible development. The proposed ordinance establishes buffering requirements in between similar developments (two single-family detached developments) that are not generally considered to be incompatible. However, since the ordinance is specifying a buffer in between structures, it should not impede interconnection as part of the overall development design.
- Transportation Element Policy 1.6.4 encourages the interconnection of vehicular or pedestrian traffic between adjacent incompatible developments. The proposed ordinance requires a buffer in between single-family detached residential developments and two-family attached residential developments that could be perceived as being incompatible. However, since the ordinance is specifying a buffer in between structures, it should not impede interconnection as part of the overall development design.

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Recommendation:

For the reasons described above, staff finds the proposed ordinance to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommends that the Planning Commission also find the proposed changes to be consistent.